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STAR WARS
DOCTOR APHRA

WORST AMONG EQUALS

Part II

Rogue archaeologist Doctor Aphra is on the run! Implanted with a proximity bomb, she's forced to stay close to her nemesis, the psychotic droid Triple-Zero.

It's all part of a grand experiment by the evil Doctor Cornelius Evazan, who watches from afar as Aphra blunders through the many dangers of the ultra lawful imperial world, Milvayne.

How could it get any worse? Perhaps if Triple-Zero killed the only person capable of removing the bombs and triggered a fail-safe countdown....

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THIS IS IT, NOKK. THE BIG ONE.
Winloss & Nokk. (Wish They Were) The Best Monster Hunters In The Galaxy.
HOW DO I LOOK?
SSS. YOU LOOK EXACTLY LIKE A MIDDLE-AGED SCOUNDREL WITH A THING FOR REPTILES GETTING SWEATY OVER A NEW CLIENT.
AN UNCANNY TRANSFORMATION, WINLOSS.
HILARIOUS. LOOK--IT'S ROYALTY! I'M TRYIN' TA SCRUB UP IS ALL!
DOES THAT SHIP LOOK ROYAL TO YOU? THIS WHOLE THING STINKS--AND THAT'S DESPITE COMPETING WITH YOUR COLOGNE.
HM. I LOVE HOW SLITTY YOUR PUPILS GO WHEN YOU'RE BEIN' ALL SUSPICIOUS.
PROFESSIONAL FACE, FOOL OF A HUSBAND. AND FOR VOID'S SAKE DON'T SPOUT SOME MORONIC ONE-LINER AS WE GO IN.
PSSSHHT
SOMEBODY CALL THE PROFESSIONALS?
=SIGH=

YES. BUT YOU TWO WILL HAVE TO DO.
Princess Leia Organa. (Apparently.)
YOUR HIGHNESS.
WHAT'S THE GIG, SHE-MAMMAL?

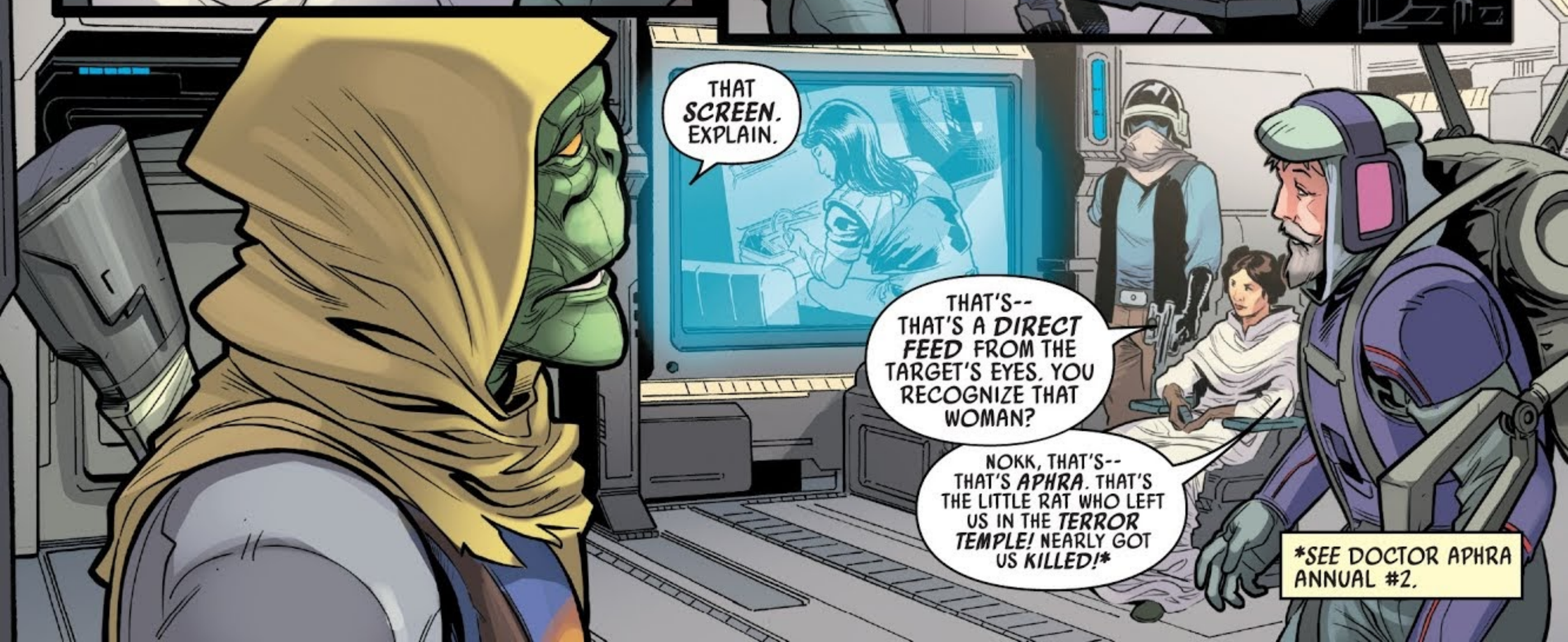
STRAIGHT TO THE POINT. THAT'S GOOD.
BEHOLD: THE TRIPLE-ZERO MATRIX. A TRULY EVIL BEAST, AND AN ENEMY OF THE REBELLION. YOU MUST DESTROY IT.

NOPE.
UH. PLEASE?

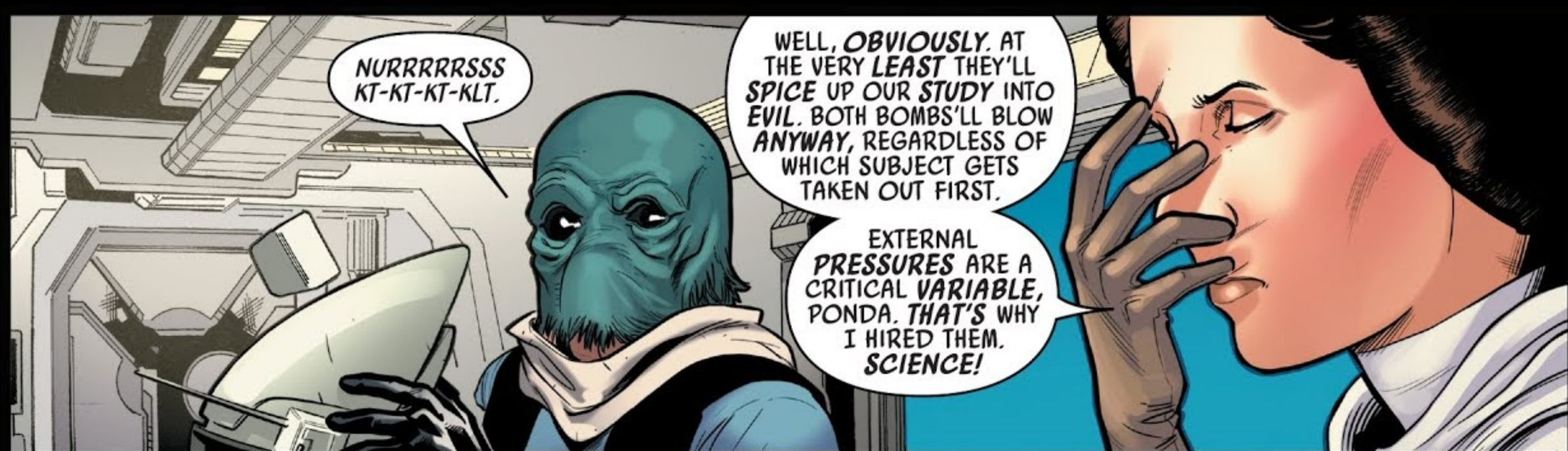
LISTEN--YOUR ROYAL COIFFEURNESS--MY WIFE'S A HIGHLY PRINCIPLED HUNTER. WE'RE TRAPPERS, SEE? NOT KILLERS.
AND WHEREAS I DON'T WANNA GET INTO THE SEMANTICS OF THE WORD "MONSTER," WE AIN'T REALLY IN THE BUSINESS OF DROID RETRIEVAL.
BUT--

NO BUTS. YOUR FACE SMELLS OF EXOTIC BIOENGINEERING AND YOUR GUARD REEKS OF AQUALISH BEER. ALSO, YOUR VOICE IS HORRIBLE.
THERE IS CLEARLY SOMETHING SHADY AFOOT HERE.

WHAT MY WIFE'S SAYIN' IS, WE'RE GONNA NEED YOU TO QUADRUPLE THE PRICE AND PUT DOWN A DEPOSIT.
WAIT.


THAT SCREEN. EXPLAIN.
THAT'S-- THAT'S A DIRECT FEED FROM THE TARGET'S EYES. YOU RECOGNIZE THAT WOMAN?
NOKK, THAT'S-- THAT'S APHRA. THAT'S THE LITTLE RAT WHO LEFT US IN THE TERROR TEMPLE! NEARLY GOT US KILLED!*
*SEE DOCTOR APHRA ANNUAL #2.

SSSS. I KNOW WHO SHE IS, WINLOSS. WHY DO YOU THINK MY FACE IS SUCH A VISION OF INCANDESCENT RAGE?
RRRIGHT. RIGHT, SORRY, I, UH...I DIDN'T NOTICE.
ALL RIGHT: NEW DEAL. PAYMENT ON DELIVERY. MERELY INCAPACITATE THE DROID.
KILL THE WOMAN.
WE'LL DO IT.


NURRRRRSSS KT-KT-KT-KLT.
WELL, OBVIOUSLY. AT THE VERY LEAST THEY'LL SPICE UP OUR STUDY INTO EVIL. BOTH BOMBS'LL BLOW ANYWAY, REGARDLESS OF WHICH SUBJECT GETS TAKEN OUT FIRST.
EXTERNAL PRESSURES ARE A CRITICAL VARIABLE, PONDA. THAT'S WHY I HIRED THEM. SCIENCE!

AND TH-THAT'S THE ONLY REASON.
I WILL FIND YOU, LITTLE TORMENTOR. I DO SO HOPE YOU KNOW THAT.
Doctor Cornelius Evazan. (Picked The Wrong Droid To Experiment On.)

I BELIEVE I SHALL START BY SOFTLY INSERTING **ELECTRODES** INTO YOUR **EYEBALLS**--IT SEEMS ONLY **FAIR**--BEFORE--

SERIOUSLY, TRIPLE-ZERO?! TEN HOURS 'TIL WE **EXPLODE** AND YOU'RE THREATENING MIRRORS?

CHARACTERISTICALLY INACCURATE. **NINE HOURS AND 37 MINUTES.**

AND SINCE YOU STARTED SHOWING YOUR **IDEA FACE** SOME TIME AGO, I JUDGE IT QUITE PROPER TO DELIVER THESE **PROMISES**--NOT **THREATS**, YOU UNDERSTAND--TO THOSE WHO--

OKAY, OKAY. **GEEZ.**

Milvayne.

LOOK, THE **CYBERNETICIST** MENTIONED HIS **MENTOR**, RIGHT? JUST BEFORE YOU NEEDLESSLY MURDERED HIM.

I TAKE EXCEPTION TO "NEEDLESSLY." HE WAS **VERY** IRRITATING.

WELL, I'VE LOOKED HIM UP. THIS **PROFESSOR PREXO** GUY'S THE **REAL DEAL**. HE COULD REMOVE THE BOMBS, EASY.

PROBLEM IS, HE WON'T TAKE UNSOLICITED **COMMS** AND HE LIVES ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THE **METROMASS**.

THIS DUMP ISN'T EXACTLY **TRAVEL FRIENDLY** FOR FUGITIVES WITH NO I.D., YOU KNOW?

OH **COME** NOW, DOCTOR--YOU'RE BEING DREADFULLY **HARSH** ON THE PLACE.

PLEASE! HAVE MERCY!

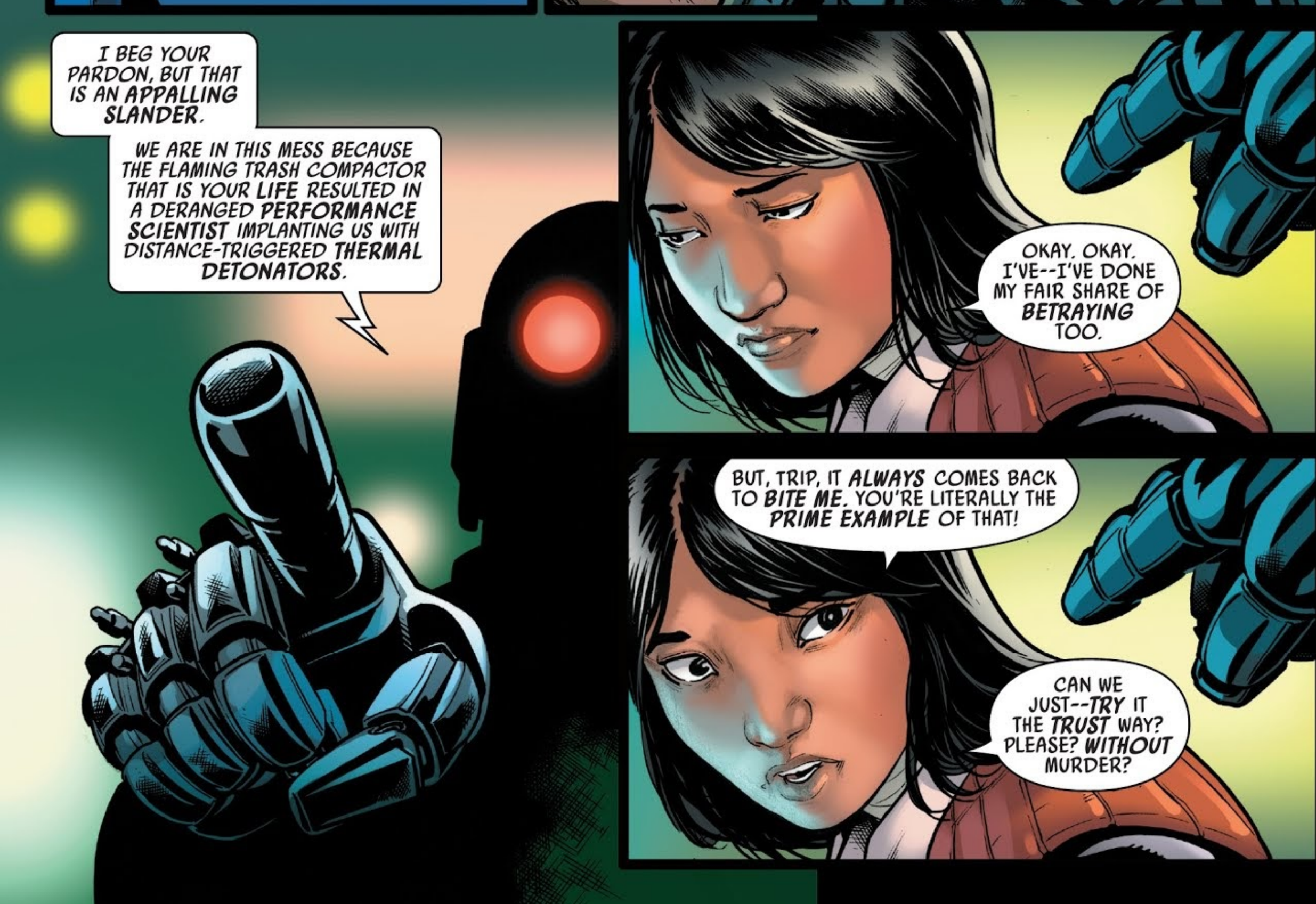
AN ENTIRE SOCIAL SYSTEM BUILT ON **NEIGHBORLY BETRAYAL** AND **FEAR**. LOOK **THERE**--YOU SEE?

IT HAS A CERTAIN RUSTIC CHARM.
ACCUSED AND CONDEMNED!
ILLEGAL STOWAWAY!
DEALER OF BANNED LITERATURE!
BANKRUPT DEBTOR!
PLEASE! PLEASE DON'T DO THIS!
LET JUSTICE BE SERVED! PROTECT THE PERFECT!
ORGANIC COURT IS ADJOURNED. BRING UP THE DEFECTIVES.
BLEE..
KLK..
EEP!
ZZK!
W-WAIT! PLEASE! IT'S ONLY A BIT OF RUST! I'M STILL FULLY FUNCTIONAL!

STILL CHARMED?
...

OKAY, I HAVE A PLAN.
I DESPISE IT.
YOU HAVEN'T HEARD IT YET.
I DON'T BELIEVE THAT'S RELEVANT. I CAN TELL FROM YOUR CLEAR SYMPTOMS OF ANXIETY THAT YOU'RE GOING TO ASK ME TO PLACE TRUST IN OTHER BEINGS.

I IMAGINE YOU EXPECT US TO INCENTIVIZE THEM BY MEANS OF BRIBERY OR--OH DEAR--DECENCY RATHER THAN PAIN AND TERROR.
TRIP, WE'RE IN THIS MESS BECAUSE YOU COULDN'T STOP YOURSELF FROM TERRORIZING THE ONE GUY WHO COULD HELP US!


I BEG YOUR PARDON, BUT THAT IS AN APPALLING SLANDER.
WE ARE IN THIS MESS BECAUSE THE FLAMING TRASH COMPACTOR THAT IS YOUR LIFE RESULTED IN A DERANGED PERFORMANCE SCIENTIST IMPLANTING US WITH DISTANCE-TRIGGERED THERMAL DETONATORS.
OKAY, OKAY. I'VE--I'VE DONE MY FAIR SHARE OF BETRAYING TOO.
BUT, TRIP, IT ALWAYS COMES BACK TO BITE ME. YOU'RE LITERALLY THE PRIME EXAMPLE OF THAT!
CAN WE JUST--TRY IT THE TRUST WAY? PLEASE? WITHOUT MURDER?

Twelve Minutes And Zero Homicides Later.

HI, DRIVER! I NEED TO GET TO SOUTH DISTRICT SEVEN AND NO, BEFORE YOU ASK, I DON'T HAVE I.D.

BUT IF YOU WILL DISCREETLY GLANCE AT MY HAND YOU'LL SEE I DO, HOWEVER, HAVE A FISTFUL OF CREDITS.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT. THAT'S YOUR PLAN. PUBLIC TRANSPORT-- WITHOUT MURDER.

LIKE SOME SORT OF-- ORDINARY PERSON...

WHAT MAKES YOU THINK I'D TAKE A BRIBE?

WELL, I RAN SOME VERY SOPHISTICATED SLICETECH THROUGH THE LOCAL NET, CO-PLOTTING SUSPECTED CRIMINAL ACTIVITY WITH BUS SCHEDULES, AND--

OKAY-- OKAY, KEEP IT DOWN. SLAP IN ANOTHER FIFTY AND YOU GOT A DEAL.

EXTORTION. I PROPOSE WE GIVE YOU FIFTY LACERATIONS INST--

WHRR CLK!

HAHAHA HE'S SO ECCENTRIC DEAL!

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HMF. YOU'RE IN COACH EPSILON, LADY.
MISTER ECCENTRIC THERE RIDES IN THE DROID WAGON IN THE BACK.
THAT'S-- THAT'S MORE THAN TWENTY METERS AWAY. THE BOMBS WILL TRIGGER...
IT'S WORSE THAN THAT. THOSE DROIDS ALL HAVE RESTRAINING BOLTS. THE CONVERSATION WILL BE ABYSMAL.

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INFORMAHUB? I GOT A DEFECTIVE DROID HERE, MAKING THREATS IN PUBLIC.
WHRR CLK!
OH DEAR. IF I MUST EXPLAIN THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN THREAT AND INTENTION ONCE MORE I SHALL LOSE MY T--
TRIP! BEHIND Y--
DEFECTIVE!
DEFECTIVE!
CLNK!
DEFECTIVE!

YOU OKAY, HONEY? YOU'RE LOOKIN' KINDA PALE THERE. HERE--I'LL BUMP YA TO PENULTIMATE CLASS, NO EXTRA CHARGE.
YOU'RE... YOU'RE BEING NICE TO ME NOW?

HEY, YOU JUST MADE ME A HUNDRED OFFA THE SNITCHLINE. LEAST I CAN DO.
THAT'S...THAT'S REALLY THOUGHTFUL AND EVERYTHING, I-IT'S JUST...I'M SUPPOSED TO STAY REALLY CLOSE TO THAT DROID OR...

WOOP WOOP WOOP WOOP
OH NO.
O-OKAY, TWO QUESTIONS--

ONE: IS IT BETTER TO DEFINITELY DIE STANDING STILL OR PROBABLY DIE AFTER A SHORT PERIOD OF PLUMMETING TERROR?
SECOND ONE. LOT CAN HAPPEN IN A SHORT PERIOD.
QUESTION TWO: CAN I HAVE MY MONEY BACK?
NOT A CHANCE.

THANKS ANYWAY.
HEY! MY GUN!

AAAAA!
FWOP
BEEP!
A NET. OHHH, THANK THE VOID...
TRIP? TRIP, ARE YOU NEARBY?
YES, INDEED. ALTHOUGH NOT, I FEAR, ALONE.
NEW FILTHFALL! MACHINE OR MEAT?! MACHINE OR MEAT?!
T-TRIP?
W-WHAT THE HELL IS THAT?
SCRONCH!
WAAH-HOO! FUNCTIONING MECHJUNK, GURTYL! WE CAN TRADE THAT UGLY SUCKER FOR TWO QUARTS WATER AND A BARREL OF STEW, EASY!
YOU HOLD HIM TIGHT, GIRL!
AW, HELL.

OH--HEY THERE. YOU WOUNDED, LADY?
YOU GIMME ANY TROUBLE IF I TRIED SELLIN' YOU TO THE CANNIBALS?
VERY MUCH SO. SPIT OUT THE DROID.
AH, POOP. LET GO, GURTYL.
ONE FORESEES YOU DOING SOME LETTING GO OF YOUR OWN, CHILD.
WAIT! WAIT! TRIP! DON'T KILL HER!
MY DEAR DOCTOR.
AMUSING THOUGH IT IS THAT YOU ACT AS IF YOU HAVE THE SLIGHTEST COMMAND OVER ME, IT IS FRIGHTFULLY IMPORTANT YOU UNDERSTAND:
EACH FRESH SPASM OF CONCERN FOR YOUR FELLOW ORGANICS DEEPENS MY VIEW THAT AN IDEAL TRAVELING COMPANION REQUIRES NEITHER TONGUE NOR FINGERS.
I-I-IT'S NOT ABOUT THAT!
SHE'S ON A QABERWORM! THEY'RE FIERCELY PROTECTIVE OF THEIR OWNERS AND THEY DON'T FEEL PAIN! HURT HER AND YOU'RE SCRAP!
NO PAIN? WHAT SORT OF INEFFICIENT DESIGN IS TH--
WAIT.
OH DEAR...I CAN HEAR IT IN YOUR VOICE, DOCTOR.

"YOU'RE HAVING ANOTHER IDEA."

NAME'S VULAADA KLAM-- JUNKRUNNER. YOU WANT SOME SCAVSTEW?

DOCTOR APHRA-- POTENTIAL CLIENT. AND, UH--NO. THANKS. ONE THOUSAND PERCENT NO.

TRIPLE ZERO-- MINCER OF BABIES. HULLO.

YOU SURE YOU DON'T WANT TO SELL HIM? I COULD GET SOME GOOD EATS FOR THOSE SCALPELS. MAYBE EVEN SOME VEGETABLES.

NOT A CASE OF WANT, KID. HEY, THESE ARE HEATSPEX, AREN'T THEY? THAT'S HOW YOU ALL SEE THROUGH THIS FOG...

GEEZ. HOW MANY PEOPLE'RE LIVING DOWN HERE?

MILLIONS. THOUGH "LIVING" IS OVERSELLING IT.

IMMIGRANTS, DISEASE-CARRIERS, THE HOMELESS AND THE DEFECTIVE. ANYONE WHO DON'T FIT THEIR TIDY TOP WORLD, BASICALLY.

I WOULDNA LASTED FIVE MINUTES IF NOT FOR GURTYL.

THERE, YOU SEE? EVEN THE BRAT UNDERSTANDS SHE'S WORTHLESS.

IGNORE HIM. ALTHOUGH, AH...SPEAKING OF GURTYL...

SHE WANTS TO KNOW IF YOUR **BEAST** COULD CARRY US RIGHT ACROSS THE UNDER CITY IN--LET'S SEE--**NINE HOURS AND THIRTEEN MINUTES.**

BUT WE REALLY, REALLY, **REALLY** ALSO VALUE YOUR PRESENCE AND WILL **DEFINITELY NOT MURDER YOU** WHEN YOU CEASE TO BE USEFUL.

I MEAN--**WEIRD**--BUT **SURE**. IT'D BE **TIGHT**, BUT GURTYL COULD DO IT.

WHAT'S IN IT FOR **US?**

WEREN'T YOU **LISTENING?** AN ADDITIONAL NINE HOURS AND THIRTEEN MINUTES OF **DEFINITELY NOT BEING MURDERED.**

WHAT HE MEANS IS: YOU CAN HAVE **THIS.**

Y'MEAN--THIS **MOSTLY EMPTY** BAG OF MONEY I CAN'T **EAT?**

OKAY--TELL YOU **WHAT**--YOU GET US WHERE WE WANT TO **GO**, IF YOU STILL HAVE THE **SLIGHTEST DESIRE** TO BE WITHIN A THOUSAND PARSECS OF THIS DROID, HE'S ALL YOURS.

AND I CAN TRADE HIM FOR **STEW!**

GET ON.

DON'T LOOK AT ME LIKE THAT. IT'S JUST A **WHITE LIE.**

YES INDEED. ONE THAT REQUIRES THAT YOU EVENTUALLY CHEAT **HER** OR BETRAY **ME**. IN EITHER CASE--NO **GUILT** RIGHT NOW.

BUT THAT'S **YOU**--ISN'T IT, DOCTOR?

"NEVER STAYING STILL LONG ENOUGH TO COUNT THE COST."

SO, KID--WHAT? YOU WERE BORN DOWN HERE?

NAH. WAR REFUGEES.

YOU BEEN TO A FRONTLINE PLANET LATELY? THEY GOT PROPAGANDA ALL OVER.

LOVELY LAWFUL MILVAYNE! PROOF HOW PERFECT A WORLD CAN BE WHEN YOU LET THE EMPEROR IN!

WHEN THE REBELLION CAME MY FOLKS SHIPPED US HERE WITH A BIG DUMB SMILE.

ONLY--DAD HAD A SPEEDER PRANG ON HIS RECORD, AND MOM'S PAPERS HAD A STAMP ON THE WRONG PAGE.

THE FAMILY IN THE NEXT TENT AT THE PROCESSING CENTER DIDN'T LIKE HOW GURTYL SMELLED, SO--

THEY SNITCHED.

AND DOWN YOU FELL.

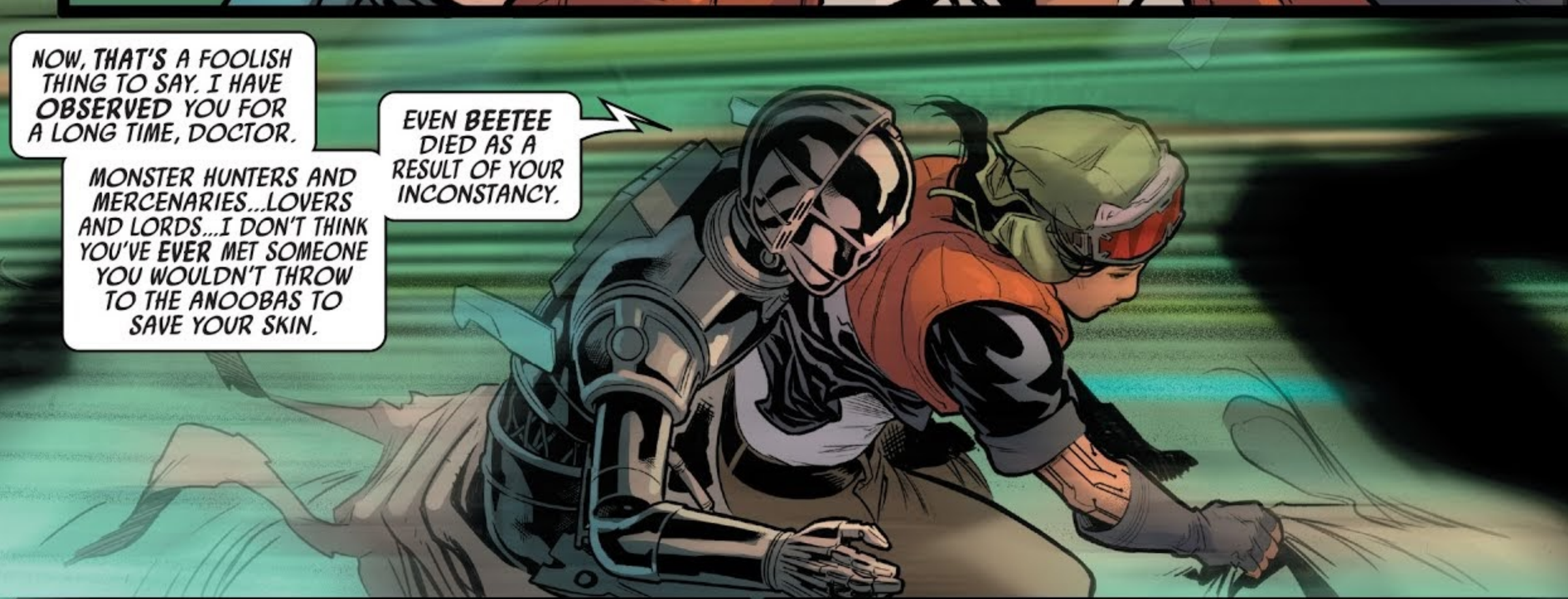
I HIT A NET.

MY FOLKS DIDN'T.

BONDING.
IT'S TOO DELICIOUS.

I IMAGINE--OH!-- YOU SEE YOURSELF IN HER. BORN SURVIVORS, UNSURE WHETHER TO FLEE THE TYRANTS OR TAKE SHELTER UNDER THEIR SKIRTS.
I'M AFRAID I'M NOT THE ONLY ONE LOOKING IN MIRRORS TODAY, DOCTOR.
YOU DO KNOW SHE'LL BETRAY YOU?

IF YOU TRULY ARE REMOTELY ALIKE IT'S PRACTICALLY INEVITABLE. WOULD YOU LIKE TO KNOW THE ODDS?
YOU DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT ME, TRIP.


NOW, THAT'S A FOOLISH THING TO SAY. I HAVE OBSERVED YOU FOR A LONG TIME, DOCTOR.
MONSTER HUNTERS AND MERCENARIES...LOVERS AND LORDS...I DON'T THINK YOU'VE EVER MET SOMEONE YOU WOULDN'T THROW TO THE ANOOBAS TO SAVE YOUR SKIN.
EVEN BEETEE DIED AS A RESULT OF YOUR INCONSTANCY.

NOT THAT I CARE.
TAM POSLA.

THE BOUNTY HUNTER YOU BACKSTABBED? JUST ONE MORE EXAMPLE.
ALTHOUGH IN THAT CASE I CONCEDE IT WAS TECHNICALLY I WHO DID THE STABBING.
N-NO, I MEAN--

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Y-YOU'RE DEAD. H-HOW ARE YOU HERE? I SAW YOU DIE...

WHHP
JUSTICE IS THE FORCE AND THE FORCE IS JUSTICE. NEITHER MAY TRULY PERISH.
WHAT THE--

TH-THE HOOKSPORES...
EXPLAIN.

TH-THERE WAS A--A CRASHED JEDI SHIP-- AND THIS SWARM OF SPACE FUNGUS THAT KINDA IMPRINTED ON A KYBER CRYSTAL--A-AND ALL IT WANTED WAS A HOST WITH FOCUS AND A SENSE OF MORAL RIGHTEOUSNESS-- AND--
ACTUALLY, STOP EXPLAINING. THIS IS EXTREMELY BORING.
I'M ALL FOR RENEWABLE RESOURCES, BUT--CALL ME OLD-FASHIONED--MURDER JUST ISN'T FUN IF THE VICTIM WON'T STAY DEAD.
AHHHH-- THE ONE WHO KILLED ME. AND WHOSE TRANSPONDER SIGNATURE LED ME DIRECTLY HERE.
LUDICROUS. I HAVEN'T SHARED MY CONTROL CODES WITH ANYONE EXCEPT--
HRHRHRHRRRR. YOU THINK FLESH IS ALL THAT THE FORCE CAN REASSEMBLE?
SNAP

BEETEE-ONE?
BRAAAAAP
ANNIHILATE THIS SCUM.
To Be Continued!

DOCTOR APHRA

NEXT ISSUE:

A long time ago in a galaxy far, far away is a lot easier to get to than you think! Write us at StarWars@Marvel.com to make it into a future letters page. Mark your notes "OKAY TO PRINT." If the Force is truly strong with you—tweet us! #aphracomic and #oktoprint